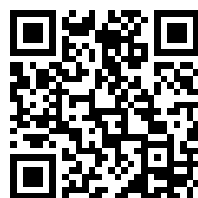

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PESSIMISM & LIFE'S IDEAL: THE HINDU OUTLOOK AND A CHALLENGE

(WITH A CRITICISM OF LIFE AND AN INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY)

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PESSIMISM AND LIFE'S IDEAL : THE HINDU

OUTLOOK AND A CHALLENGE

*(With a criticism of Life and an interpretation of History)**

THE word "Pessimism" comes from the Latin "Pessimus" which in English means "worst." According to the New English Dictionary, it was first used by Coleridge in one of his letters in 1794. The exact opposite of "Pessimism" is "Optimism" derived from the Latin "Optimus" which in English means "best". These two words are now on everybody's lips and under the influence of Western thought, we have arrived at the belief that Pessimism is bad philosophy, because it stands in the way of individual and national advancement, whereas Optimism is good as it is conducive to progress. Nor can we blame this view, for the word Pessimism is generally used in a condemnatory sense and its association, according to most Western writers, is on the whole with Atheism, for if Providence is beneficent and if teleological proof is at all a proof of the existence of God, then we cannot help characterising Pessimism as rank Atheism, though the fact remains that Pessimism is not necessarily atheistic any more than Optimism is theistic.

The religious and philosophical systems of India are called pessimistic by many Western scholars—Max Muller, it seems, has not used the term in a bad sense—for the simple reason that the fundamental principle of all these systems is that life is full of misery and the world, therefore, essentially an evil. That we have sunk so low in the scale of nations appears now to most of us to be due to our philosophy and religion and we have also come to entertain the belief that the so-called progress of the West is due to the fact that the Westerners think that life is worth living and *joie de vivre* is the basis of their existence and therefore their philosophy is preferable to ours. There are Western writers who hold that

*This is the author's own amplified English version of his Bengali article in the *Bharat-varsha* of Calcutta, Aswin, B. S. 1331.

the religion of our *Rig Veda* was healthy and optimistic, that the decline of this religion is ascribable to the doctrine of *Maya* that has made its way into the *Upanishads* or the *Inana-kanda* of the *Vedas*, and that it is in Buddhism that the religion of India has reached its nadir of decadence, for the pessimism met with here is of the gloomiest description.

There is another thing noticeable in this connection. The Westerners are generally of opinion that Pessimism is enervating and is the philosophy of weakness, whereas Optimism is a robust creed. According to the famous psychologist, the late Professor William James, this opinion is false. He has called the pessimists 'tough-minded,' and 'tender-minded' is the epithet he has applied to the optimists. Still the general opinion is opposed to that of James. As for Indian Pessimism, the prevailing Western view finds one of its latest and most characteristic expressions in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. According to the author of the article on the subject in that monumental work, the Pessimism of India in spite of a certain philosophic basis is mainly environmental and temperamental in its origin and its baneful effect has been partly neutralised by the Bhakti-cult of the *Vaishnavas*, partly by the happy state of things, economic and political, brought about by the British Government established in the country and partly by the theistic movements initiated by the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj in the British period of our history. This categorical and confident assertion fairly takes our breath away.

There is another term we come across which is very recent in its origin and stands half-way between Optimism on the one hand and Pessimism on the other. This term is Meliorism. It was coined and first used by George Eliot, the novelist. Frederic Harrison, the friend of George Eliot and disciple of Comte, called himself a Meliorist and the American philosopher, William James, also applied the term to himself. Now-a-days Meliorism seems to be the prevailing fashion in the philosophy of the West and the melioristic out-look and world-view appear to be most popular. The fact is, the out-and-out optimism of Leibnitz and the eighteenth-century Deists which is opposed to the stern realities of life and leads to self-complacency and selfish ease is quite untenable. The "optimistic sophistries of comfortable moles" cannot bear a moment's scrutiny. Schopenhauer is still unpopular, but

whatever flaw there may be in his Metaphysic, the arguments he has advanced to prove the essential evil and misery of the world are irrefragable. Even Eucken, the living philosopher of activism, admits that Schopenhauer convinces. The will to live, as ordinarily understood, must be eliminated altogether to make a higher life possible. The thoughtful men of the West now understand that optimism is a shallow affair and is the outcome of thoughtlessness or theological prejudice or both combined. But prejudice dies hard and this prejudice being also to a large extent due to the material prosperity of the Western world and hope of greater prosperity still, it is very difficult for even the best minds of the West to shake off its influence altogether. There is also the lurking fear of being called weak, should they declare in favour of pessimism, and thus we see that they have come to occupy the half-way house of Meliorism, the result of a compromise between optimism and pessimism. (They admit the existence of evil in the world; they have the fairness not to ignore or explain away the problem of evil which has proved disastrous to so many systems, but they hold that the world is improving and human happiness increasing. They also believe that misery will go on declining and happiness increasing *ad infinitum* and it should be the aim of our life to increase the measure of happiness and reduce evil as far as possible, though it is not quite clear why, if happiness spontaneously increases as Topsy 'grewed,' we should put forth any effort at all to bring it about. They all believe in infinite forward rectilinear movement, though they admit that there are occasional set-backs which, however, according to them, need not be seriously taken into account. According to all of them the imperfect world is becoming perfect and according to some the imperfect God is also getting perfect, for God is eternally realising Himself. Even God is not above the law of mighty evolution—a very unedifying spectacle indeed! I do not remember to have seen the term Meliorist applied to Hegel on the one hand and Bergson on the other, but if we carefully examine their attitude towards life, we cannot avoid the conclusion that both of them are meliorists in fact, their conflicting systems notwithstanding, for the doctrine of development is the distinctive feature of their philosophic systems, whatever their interpretation may be of development itself. As for the poet Browning, we are bound to call him a meliorist, for he really believes that the imperfect

man is getting perfect and so is the imperfect God. Then when we come to the evolutionists of the scientific world, the general trend of their belief in infinite rectilinear or forward movement strikes us as most pronounced, though, as I shall show later on, evolution supports no such conclusion. It will not be too much to say that the modern theistic and anti-theistic thinkers alike have been primarily influenced by the scientific evolutionists in their world-view and attitude towards life. Modern Christian theology has accepted from them the belief in the infinite possibility of the world's development and human progress and the theists of the Brahma Samaj of Bengal have followed suit, for they talk of the infinite progress of the soul contrary to the Hindu conception of *Atman*, non-dualistic or dualistic.

When it is suggested by Europeans and Americans that our religion and philosophy are pessimistic—the latest suggestion is to be found in Lord Ronaldshay's "India—a Bird's-Eye View," a book which has been eulogistically noticed in all the leading periodicals of England—and that is why as a nation we have fallen so low, then cannot we promptly retort by saying : " Well, how about the religion which you profess? We do not see anything but pessimism there. How do you characterise the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament and does not Jesus say in the New Testament that this world is a vale of sorrow which you must forego to follow him? Does not he predict the impending dissolution of the world and does not he consign the wicked to the roaring fire of Eternal Hell? Is not the burden of Thomas-a-Kempis' Imitation of Christ Vanity of Vanities—all is vanity and is it not a fact that Mediæval Europe was dotted all over with monasteries and nunneries to realise the ideal lived up to and preached by Jesus?"

The Christians will have to say in reply that all this is true, no doubt, that Christ was undoubtedly the Man of Sorrow, but the most important message of Christ is that of salvation and heaven. Salvation, be it noted, is not the same thing as our *Mukti*. It means life in Heaven for the chosen few by the grace of Jesus after the crack of doom. This is Christian eschatology. Till the Judgment-day every one must lie in the darkness of the grave and who is to be saved is a matter of considerable uncertainty. "The Kingdom of God is within you" is perhaps the most important message of

Christ, but there is very little of this teaching in the Church-Christianity of the West.

Here an objection may be raised by the modern Christians of the Protestant Church. They claim that the correct interpretation of Christianity is that which they have put on the Bible. The depression and gloom of Mediævalism, they say, they have shaken off completely. The exegesis of their theology they claim to be beautifully optimistic ; for absolute renunciation, monastic life and ascetic ideal have no place in their scheme and they go even so far as to say that asceticism or absolute chastity with absolute poverty is an imperfect, perverse, selfish and erroneous ideal of life. It is evident that the current Protestant Christianity is the result of a compromise with Science and Evolution on the one hand and Hegelian philosophy on the other. The latest compromise I am aware of is that with the philosophy of change and *elan vital* of Henri Bergson attempted by L. H. Miller in his book "Bergson and Religion" published in 1916. Neither Hegelian reason nor Bergsonian intuition supports the ascetic ideal of life though Christ like an Indian *Sannyasin* was an ascetic of ascetics. With what other philosophy Christianity will have yet to come to terms is in the womb of the future, but that it has come to a very sad pass goes without saying.

If it be said that Christianity cannot be called a pessimistic religion because it holds out the hope of salvation and heaven, then cannot we also at the same time say that no more is our religion pessimistic ? For, the *summum bonum* of our life is the total extinction of sorrow (*atyantika dukha-nivritti*) or the endless bliss variously called *Moksha*, *Nirvana*, *Kaivalya* and *Apavarga* and this is a much higher and far more cheerful conception than the Christian idea of salvation, because *Mukti* is not meant for the few arbitrarily chosen but it is open to all *now and here* who, through Free will, will achieve perfect mastery over themselves, since a man's *Karma* is his alone and *Karma* is not inexorable Destiny. As for Heaven and Hell, a true Hindu renounces them both.

I do not propose to say anything in this paper about a hereafter or the life after death, for my subject is Pessimism and Pessimism is not an eschatological question but a view of the life lived on earth by the natural man. An optimist says that everything is best in this best possible world and the

will to live is therefore good ; whereas the Pessimist says that it is a very bad world, being based as it is on the will to live arising from desire (*vasana*) which must be quelled, for all desire except that for liberation from the tyranny of the flesh and that for spiritual wisdom leads to nothing but bitter misery. The so-called joys of life are all fleeting—they are a delusion and a snare. Joys and sorrows follow each other in endless succession. They form a vicious circle we must get out of. How it is and how we have got into it we do not know, says the Hindu, but we do know how to get out of it. The Meliorist says that the world may not be the best possible world but it is not so bad after all and there is no harm in regulated desire and moderate enjoyment, for the world is becoming better and happier day after day. But if we ask him what he means by moderate enjoyment he will not be able to give a satisfactory answer, for what is moderate for one is not moderate for all.

The Christian explanation of life and the world may not be consistent with reason but so far as attitude towards life is concerned there is no difference between Hinduism and Christianity. They are equally pessimistic and pessimism leads to total renunciation which is the goal of Hinduism and Christianity alike. When, therefore, the current Protestant Christian theology, seeking support now from Hegel, Science and Evolution and then again from the philosophy of change and vital impulse of Bergson and indulging in melioristic hope and aspiration, deprecates the ideal of asceticism and attempts to reconcile "the world, the flesh and the devil" with the kingdom of Heaven of Christ, all that we can say is that it is not the Christianity of the Bible but a tissue of sophistries deliberately designed to suit a foregone conclusion. Nietzscheism is more honest than this sort of Christianity. If you are frank you will have to say with Swami Vivekananda, a keen observer of men and manners, that Europe became Protestant and shook off Christianity itself. If the Catholic dogma is unacceptable, reject it by all means, but why reject the soul of Christianity, the only true ideal of life ?

A thorough examination of Pessimism is absolutely necessary, as, otherwise, we shall not be able to understand the genius and spirit of the civilisation of India, nor shall we be able to ascertain truth for ourselves and life's aim and ideal. The most important problem for us is that

presented by the conflicting claims of optimism, pessimism and meliorism, and THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS HOW WE FEEL LIFE. The determination of what is called the VALUES OF LIFE in the modern philosophy of the West depends chiefly on the answer we give to this question of questions. Our "values" depend on our desires. What desire is agreeable and what desire disagreeable, what desire is to be cherished and what desire to be suppressed is the all-important question for mankind. Metaphysical problems like Monism, Dualism and Pluralism, theological problems like Mono-theism, Poly-theism, Pantheism, Pan-entheism, or any other -ism based on mere intellect is nothing but intellectualism whose importance is secondary.

From what has already been said, it is clear that the message of *Mukti* and the hope of *Nirvana* notwithstanding, the religious and philosophical systems of India have been called pessimistic for the simple reason that their fundamental principle is that life is full of misery, the world is essentially an evil, being based as it is on the will to live and desire is the cause of human woe. We have also seen that the word 'Pessimism' is generally used in a condemnatory sense though no philosophy or religion of India conveys the message of despair, though no philosophy or religion of India has ever said that there is no hope for mankind, it is all blank here and hereafter and suicide is the only escape from the tangle. This definition of pessimism, both positive and negative, we must constantly keep before our mind, we must never depart from this sense in all that follows and I hope to conclusively prove that it is the only true view of life and therefore deserves no condemnation at all. Condemnation should rightly attach to optimism and meliorism.

A complete effacement of all pre-conceived notions is a condition precedent to the ascertainment of truth. "God is good and therefore His creation cannot be an evil" is an unwarranted assumption or a *priorism* run mad. A philosophy of religion or theology not based on the psychology of universal religious experience stands self-condemned. Whether God exists and whether He is good and whether if He is good the world also must be good is a matter about which any pre-conceived notion will preclude the possibility of the discovery of truth. The most important thing about life is experience, be it materialistic or spiritualistic. This experience

springs primarily from feeling arising from sensation without which all cognition is simply impossible. If we feel, then only shall we be able to think and then to act. Suppose I happen to touch fire. The immediate result is the feeling of pain. Then the thought comes that fire burns and in consequence I so act as not to touch fire again.

In solving any great problem of life, this feeling is our chief guide. As Ruskin has truly said : "The ennobling difference between one man and another is precisely this—that one man feels more than another." A discussion without feeling for its basis is no better than logic-chopping and logomachy. It never appeals to any one and nobody has patience with it. If we try to understand the subject of this paper through feeling then only will it be possible for us to have a proper understanding. All the Indian systems of philosophy which influence our lives have their origin in feeling. As the author of *Sankhya-karika* says : *Dukha-trayabhigatah Jignasa tadavaghatate hetou* (all philosophical enquiry arises from the feeling of three kinds of pain—*adhyatmik* or, mental, *adhi-bhoutik* or physical and *adhi-daivic* or accidental, and the end of such enquiry is the radical extinction of pain).

Now the first question is whether the feeling from which pessimism arises is a universal experience or not ; secondly, whether it is possible to compile a statistical account from which by striking a balance between happiness and misery we can confidently assert that misery preponderates in life ; and thirdly, whether pessimism has a scientific basis at all.

My answer to the first question is that the gay and the giddy being devoid of any depth of feeling should be left out of account. Their feeling has no value for life and so they cannot complain if I ignore them altogether. All that we can do is to turn to the founders of the great religions of the world and the saints and devout souls who live those religions, for, "*religion is the chief fact with regard to man.*" If we notice any agreement in the feelings of these great souls who are the salt of the earth, then I presume that it is safe to say that pessimistic feeling is a universal experience. I would rather not say anything particular about Mahommed but that there was a deep sorrow in his life—sorrow for himself and sorrow for his country is a truth about which there can be no difference of opinion. But, though I do not say anything particular about Mahommed, yet I can say most empha-

tically that the religion of the Moslem *Sufis* is the religion of Faquirs and Dervishes *par excellence* and nobody becomes a Faquir unless he is thoroughly convinced that the life of the world is an evil

“ Like to the apples on the Dead Sea shore,
All ashes to the taste. ”

The religious and philosophical systems of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains, the Tao-ism of the great La-o-tze of China, the Jew's religion of the Old Testament, and the Christian's religion of the New Testament are all pessimistic without an iota of doubt. The religion of the Avesta again is equally pessimistic, for if the Ahura Mazda of Zoroaster represents Heaven or the principle of good, his Ahriman represents the world or the principle of evil. Last of all, coming down to the small religious sects of the present day at home and abroad, we see that wherever there is a strong sense of sin and all the misery it brings in its train there is pessimism—it matters very little whether the members of these sects would like to call themselves pessimists or not.

The second question is about statistics. My answer to this question is that such statistics are not possible. But that need not cause any exultation in the optimistic camp, for optimistic philosophy is not based on statistics either. If the optimists say that pessimism is dogmatic, environmental and temperamental, then we shall fling the charge in their face. That pessimism is nothing of the kind I shall show by and by. That it is not dogmatic but rational I shall establish on ethical proof and while marshalling the ethical proof I shall not only answer the third question about the scientific basis of pessimism but shall also show the unscientific character of optimism and meliorism alike.

To begin with, I maintain that pessimism, the logical consequence of which is absolute renunciation, is the foundation of all morality, that no ethical theory can be based on science and evolution and therefore the talk of the scientific basis of pessimism is the idlest conceivable. But if we view the question from the standpoint of science and evolution at all we clearly see that neither optimism nor meliorism has any scientific basis to stand upon, for science leads to pessimism in that sense in which the term is not used by any philosopher, Indian or European—the Indian equivalent is *dukha-vada*—and in which I have not used the term anywhere in the previous pages of my

paper. Science leads to that pessimism which holds out no hope to mortals, to think of which is "to be full of sorrow and leaden-eyed despairs," for science and evolution have nothing to say about the meaning of life, the aim and end of our existence.

The test of ethical life is the crucial test, and it is this test that I propose to apply to the subject of this paper. God or no God, a hereafter or no hereafter, the moment I find the ethical ideal I find the meaning and purpose of my life. My life then cannot be lived in vain.

If we look at the question from mere outside we shall not be able to obtain any satisfactory result. That which constitutes the manhood of man solves the problem of optimism and pessimism and solves the problem of life as well.

Where then lies the manhood of man? It lies in striving after a better life, in becoming and being, in creative art,—and the highest man is he who is passion-free, who loves all and is master of himself. If we try to get to the bottom of this striving, we are bound to admit that the root-cause of all such endeavour is nothing but discontent with things as they are. Even material progress arises from a sense of necessity and necessity is the mother of inventions. The progress achieved in science and art is due to a sense of want and social and political progress in the true sense of the term is inconceivable without social and political discontent. All this is not pessimism strictly speaking, but a sense of necessity, a sense of want and the feeling of discontent are the chief ingredients of the pessimistic feeling, though pessimism, rightly understood, concerns moral and spiritual life alone and it is to this life that other departments of life must be subordinated according to the Pessimist. It is by the moral standard therefore that we shall judge pessimism, for it is moral value that is supreme and human civilisation is meaningless without the moral basis to support it. The talk of progress without morality is a provoking cant. Science without conscience is an unmitigated evil and political and industrial greatness at the expense of others is the gravest wrong to humanity. It is the cause of untold woe.

The pessimist's emphasis is on the moral value but he does not believe in a millennium. Yet he does his duty all the same, for he knows that "to work alone he has the right and not to the fruits thereof." He does his duty better than those

who desire success but he does not make a fetish of activism and work, for he knows how to reconcile the claims of activism and quietism, the *Karma* and *Naishkarmya* of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Infinite rest at the heart of infinite action—such is his conception of life. Quadrumanous activity that disturbs the repose of the soul and brings all our woe and a brutal lethargy, the peace of death, he equally abhors. He knows the world as it is and does not expect from it any permanent good. The world sometimes becomes better and sometimes worse. It becomes better sometimes not by reason of itself but in spite of itself—by reason of the force that acts against it. Says Lord Sri Krishna : “AS OFTEN AS righteousness will decline and unrighteousness will raise its head, SO OFTEN will I verily incarnate Myself.” No millennial or melioristic hope this—for here is a clear recognition of alternation in the triumph of good and in the triumph of evil in the affairs of men—a vicious circle again. That this is the right view supported by history I shall show as I proceed. The pessimist has no delusion. The fool's paradise is not for him.

Pessimism in its relation to the ethical ideal, moral life or the life of conscience is an all-important question. The Sanskrit name for the moral law is *dharma* and *dharmabuddhi* is the Sanskrit equivalent of conscience, though the word *dharma* has other meanings as well.

Now, what is this moral life, this life of conscience and where is its origin ? That a higher moral life has evolved from a lower life of morality I readily admit, but what I do not admit is that morality has evolved from non-morality at all. The gap between the organic and the inorganic, the mechanical and the vital may or may not be filled, but what can never be filled is the gap between the merely vital and the moral. Morality can have evolved from morality only. What has evolved must have existed in an involved or imperfect state. Where there is no involution there can be no evolution. How can that evolve which never was ? But because morality has evolved therefore it does not follow that it will go on evolving *ad infinitum*. This is not science but Hegel all over. *Infinite possibility is a Hegelian fiction*. Not only has it no proof but it is a contradiction in terms and Hegel knew it. But what terror has contradiction for Hegel ? As a deft magician waves his wand and says : “Hey, Presto Pass !” so Hegel mutters his formula of Identity in contradiction,

That there can be no evolution without involution, that 'variation' does not drop from the clouds and evolution cannot go on *ad infinitum* is a truth which may be regarded as a very great contribution of Swami Vivekananda to the philosophic thought of the modern world. It is the Swami's re-statement of a very old truth in the terms of modern science. *Jat-yantaro Parinama Prakritya purat* (transmutation of species through the infilling of Nature) is an aphorism of Patanjali I have not seen interpreted in this way by any one else. The law of evolution with the involution it presupposes is a very old law, but in its modern form it is the result of biological research. That Hegelianism at one time became the dominant philosophy of the West is due to its doctrine of development. The fancied harmony in the system between the Absolute on the one hand and science and evolution on the other commended this system to many, and the Westernised Hindus are still chewing the cud of Hegelian philosophy. A very poor Absolute indeed ! I can very well understand why the Pragmatist of to-day laughs at Hegel's Absolute and calls it a Zero. The abolition of such an Absolute does not make the least difference in our life. For the true Absolute we must come to the Vedanta philosophy of Hindustan.

Evolution as it is now understood is the result of biological research, but I am afraid the data of Biology do not support the theory of infinite progress. All scientific men admit that the world will some day come to an end and not a vestige of what we call progress will survive the shock of time. According to Huxley who believes not only in gradual progress but also in progress *per saltum*, Evolution means not only a movement forward but a movement backward as well. Geologists are of opinion that a glacial age may come again and then, adaptation to environment being a condition of evolution, the highest forms of life will perish and the lowest forms endure. These lowest forms will then be the fittest and it is they, therefore, that will survive. The fittest of Biology is not only *not* fittest in the intellectual and moral sense but in the sense of physical strength as well. That the course of human life and human history is not rectilinear but curvilinear is a more reasonable supposition. Swami Vivekananda is quite right when he says mathematically that a straight line infinitely produced is a circle. He has also given examples from the histories of philosophy and science. There can be no forward movement of philosophy after the conception of

absolute unity has been reached. Conservation of energy is the last generalisation of science. When the so-called elements of chemistry will be reduced to one, the progress of Chemistry in the true sense of the term must come to an end. The ancient Hindu philosophy like the philosophy of ancient Greece supports this curvilinear movement, this cyclical movement, this law of rise and fall, fall and rise, *Srishhti* and *laya*, *laya* and *Srishhti*, chaos after cosmos, cosmos after chaos, through endless time, through all eternity. A vicious circle again we must get out of ! Infinite rectilinear forward movement has absolutely no proof. We may very well call it the poet's fancy or the philosopher's fiction.

It has become necessary for me to say so much about evolution because I know many people who derive infinite satisfaction from the thought of relativity in the moral world. Their study of Biology and Sociology has led them to the belief that morality is something like an epi-phenomenon of life and so much should not be made of it. I speak from personal experience and I speak in sorrow. Morality is a fact not to be made light of. The greatest philosopher of modern Europe, I believe, was Kant and Kant uttered a great truth when he said : "Two things fill me with wonder—the starry sky without and the moral principle within." The starry sky without every one can understand but the moral principle within is not quite so clear to many. There is nothing more mysterious in the universe than the dawn of moral sense in man. It is nowhere visible in Nature. Nature means the instinct of self-preservation. Nature means reproduction of the species. Nature means struggle for existence. To lie and to rob may very often 'be a "biological necessity," for that is quite natural, but morality is the very reverse of this. The first terms of morality, as we conceive it, are self-restraint and truth, the second terms justice and chivalry, the third and last terms *ahimsa* and loving service of man. *Morality is a protest against Nature. Morality is anti-natural or unnatural, but whatever is anti-natural is not necessarily moral.* As Herbert Spencer raised the fabric of his ethical theory on the foundation of spontaneous evolution, Huxley his contemporary and a greater biologist than he smashed it to atoms with the sledge-hammer blow dealt in his ablest work as a thinker, *Evolution and Ethics*. That this lecture has caused sleeplessness to many appears from the following remarks in the *International Journal of Ethics* of

January, 1925, page 191, where in connection with Mr. William McDougall's latest book *Ethics and Some Modern World Problems*, the reviewer says : "When in 1893 Mr. McDougall read Huxley's famous Romanes lecture pointing out the disharmony between evolution and ethics, he received a severe moral shock, followed by deep depression, and from that shock and depression he has never wholly recovered." Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* does not cause the least surprise to the pessimists. It does not cause the least depression to them. On the contrary it fills them with joy, for they see that Huxley has here told the bare truth and nothing but truth. Only what they do not understand is the unfounded melioristic hope he holds out in the closing pages of his book—a hope that does not follow from his premisses. Huxley is not garrulous like Herbert Spencer and is very cautious in his generalisations, but in spite of the slight inconsistency just noticed the few things he has said have pith and marrow in them. He proves to a demonstration that morality cannot be explained by the biological law. He says with all the emphasis he can command that *Ethical process is diametrically opposed to the Cosmic process*. Cosmic process means that which is spontaneously going on and is therefore natural. Ethical process means that which ought to be and is therefore unnatural. This gulf between *is* and *ought*, this gulf between the outer world and the inner world, or in the language of James, this "disjunction" is a fact which refuses to be blinked. Where then is Hegel's Block-universe? Through what feat of dialectic, through what prestidigital skill can he bridge this yawning gulf? It will not do to say : "Die to live," specially when "to die," according to Hegel, does not mean "to die altogether to the world of sense," when "to die" does not mean, according to him, "to lose oneself *completely* to save oneself." An epigram is not a solution. If "to die to live" is a truth as a true Christian understands it—as a true Hindu understands it,—then philosophy must show how it is possible.

No philosophy can show it, but it is a fact. Kant as an honest philosopher knew it and that is why he made no attempt to reconcile the world with his categorical imperative. The gulf between his Pure Reason and Practical Reason is due to this. The Vedantist knows it. That is how *Maya-vada* comes in. *Maya-vada* is no explanation but a mere statement of fact. *Maya* is *anirvachya* or that which cannot be explained, about which nothing can be affirmed or denied but

which has got to be rejected by all means and therefore there is no harm in calling it a cosmic illusion or something that is false. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, "The Hindu is frank. He says, 'I do not know how the world is, no cause-and-effect philosophy can explain it, but I *do* know how to get out of it, and get out of it we must.' " I have not quoted the Swami *verbatim*, but this is the sense of what he has said. No agnosticism this, but this is all we need to know before we want to know anything more. This is the A, B, C, of the Vedanta philosophy.

There is no way out of *Maya-vada* and I cannot help accepting it, for a great disjunction there is and it cannot be explained away. If the block-universe of Hegel is unacceptable, the pluralism and multi-verse of James is equally unacceptable. But this is a large subject and not within the scope of this paper.

Maya-vada has been generally approached from the intellectual stand-point. In modern times Swami Vivekananda has approached the subject from the ethical point of view in his lectures on Jnana Yoga and Practical Vedanta, and Max Muller has said that ethics is at the beginning, ethics is in the middle and ethics at the end of the Vedanta philosophy. If our Professors of Philosophy instead of trying in vain to bring the Vedanta into line with Hegelianism, concentrate their attention on a systematic ethical exposition of *Maya-vada*, the negative aspect of the Vedanta, then they will be earning the gratitude of the country and doing a real service to the world. In the traditional interpretation of *Maya-vada*, the ethical element is implicit. A complete ethical proof was not considered necessary owing to the prevailing belief that nobody was entitled to the study of the Vedanta unless he had cultivated to the fullest possible extent *Vairagya* or the spirit of detachment. But now that *Vairagya* itself has been called in question by the so-called reformers, æstheticians and politicians of our country, a very full ethical proof of *Maya-vada* has become absolutely necessary. I shall show later on that our social reformers, æstheticians and politicians have nothing to fear from the spirit of *Vairagya*, for their pet interests will not suffer at all, but on the contrary, these interests will be promoted.

Moral life or the life of conscience (*dharma-jiban*) means primarily a fight with Nature (*pravritti*), for Nature includes

all the impulses Nature has implanted in us, and progress in moral life means nothing but progress in our conquest of *artha* and *kama* (desire and means) or RAJO-GUNA and TAMO-GUNA which include all the six passions, viz., *kama* (lust), *krodha* (wrath), *lobha* (greed), *mada* (pride), *moha* (all sorts of infatuation) and *matsarya* (envy) and advance towards *sattwa-guna* and *nivritti* (return path or renunciation) ; or, in other words, moral progress means the progressive assertion of our manhood till at last we get beyond all the three *gunas*—realise the Absolute Good and achieve the final realisation of *Moksha* or *Nirvana* when all the fetters drop and *karma* is no bondage. This is a struggle and an achievement we come across nowhere in the animal world. It is nowhere to be found in Nature. *What is called higher nature is anti-Nature and not Nature, for the term Nature has a specific meaning* and we have no right to depart from this sense of the word. NATURE IS UNMORAL. MAN'S REVOLT AGAINST NATURE ARISES FROM A FEELING OF PROFOUND DISCONTENT. THIS DISCONTENT IS DIVINE AND IT IS NOTHING BUT PESSIMISM. IT IS THIS DISCONTENT THAT ULTIMATELY LEADS TO CONTENTMENT. Says Sankaracharya : "*Kathamiha manava tava santosha* (How, O man, can you have contentment here) ?" Says Vivekananda : "*Hetha sukh iccha matiman* (Do you want happiness here, O you intelligent man) ?" And Bhagawan Ramakrishna says in his homely way with his characteristic touch of humour : "Suppose you are a High Court Judge. You have got wealth, position, name, fame, sons and daughters. You think it is all right with you and God says : 'Amen ! Be it so !' Then a time comes when you say : 'What have I done ?' and God says : 'What have you done indeed ?'" I do not pretend to know a better explanation of morality than this. How many types of ethical theory have we not seen in our days and how high-sounding are not their names—Utilitarianism, Eudæmonism, Evolution, Intuition, Hegel's Self-realisation according to which all the physical and mental faculties are to be harmoniously cultivated and according to which the complete extinction of desires, including sexual, is bad ! But *Pessimism, which is the foundation of ascetic or absolute morality, gives us an ideal which nothing can approach and than which nothing can claim to be more satisfactory.* This ascetic morality cannot be deduced from optimism or meliorism, and this is the last

term of the evolution of morality. *Morality cannot evolve beyond this stage.* If anybody believes that it can, I shall be glad to see him explain his position. That the ASCETIC IDEAL IS NOT ANTI-SOCIAL and ASCETIC MORALITY AND PERFECT LOVE GO TOGETHER I shall show later on. It is this absolute standard that we must constantly keep in view. If we judge human conduct by this absolute standard, then only is it possible for us to fix its place and know its worth. There is no other means of evaluation I am aware of.

It is a matter of regret that there is so much reluctance to admit that ascetic morality, absolute morality or total renunciation is the highest ideal of life. The chief cause of the prevailing doubt as to the supremacy of the ideal is psychological. Ordinary men have such fondness for their natural impulses and propensities that they shudder at the thought of the extinction of all that they value in life, and in this country a subsidiary cause is that certain religious sects in recent times were founded by householders who were all prayerful men, no doubt, and good men as the term is commonly understood, but who could not wholly subdue their desires and rise above all frailties. To assign to *sannyasa* a higher place is to lower the position of these sects. The talk of total renunciation or complete *vairagya* touches the self-love of these sects, and so there is no end of flutter in their dove-cots. Thus we see that in self-defence they cite those texts from the *Samhitas* which applaud the householder's life, though at other times their reverence for the *Samhita-kars* (law-givers) is not much in evidence. Poor Rajarshi Janaka is also trotted out now and then to save the situation ! I have yet to know that Rajarshi Janaka increased and multiplied like flies in summer till the end of his days and had any yearning for creature comforts like Tom, Dick and Harry.

I do not mean offence to anyone but plain truths have to be plainly told and the relation between cause and effect has to be established in this world of Maya. I think it unnecessary to quote Scripture to show that ascetic morality or *sannyasa* is the highest ideal of life. I shall show it by the ordinary process of reasoning. If you once admit that self-restraint (*indriya-nigraha*, *samyam*) is the very stuff of morality (*dharma*), then you will have also to admit that the man who has completely quelled his passions (*jitendriya*) is the man whose moral life (*dharma-jivan*) is the highest. If chastity

is *dharma* at all, then you cannot but admit that absolute chastity or spotless celibacy (*lifelong brahmacharya*) is a higher life than the married state. By married life I mean the sexual relation between man and woman—not *the married life of Bhagawan Ramakrishna*. His was a married life absolutely free from lust. *His place is higher than that of any sannyasin the world has ever produced, not barring even the founders of the great religions of the world.* It is much easier to be a celibate than to marry and live with one's wife, and at the same time abstain from any carnal connection with her. It is much easier to avoid fire than to live in it and go unscathed. *What spiritual marriage is Sri Ramakrishna alone has revealed to the world.* It is not necessary to speak of any miracle in his life, for a miracle-monger he emphatically was not. *His married life is the greatest miracle the world has to show to man.* Whoever has tried in his life to realise this ideal knows how difficult it is, if not impossible. I know only of one instance that may be cited as a *very faint* parallel. From Porphyry's Letters to Marcella, it appears that the great disciple of Plotinus *perhaps* was successful in realising this ideal, but Porphyry's case is not exactly like that of Ramakrishna, for he married Marcella when he was sixty years old, and Marcella, when wedded to him, was a widow with several children, and they generally lived apart. Why he married Marcella at all cannot be definitely said—platonic love has nothing to do with marriage—nor does his case rest on as clear a proof of absolute spiritual marriage as that of Bhagawan Ramakrishna of hallowed memory. It is very difficult to say why Ramakrishna married. May we not presume that he married in order to show the householders how married life should be lived, in order that householders might at least strive after the ideal, if they could not fully attain to it?

As in the complete conquest of lust lies the highest moral life, so does it lie in the complete conquest of greed or in absolute poverty—and absolute poverty without absolute chastity is inconceivable, for a householder with his wife and children must earn money to support his family, but money to him should not be all in all. Bread is necessary, but man should not live by bread alone. You cannot worship God and Mammon at the same time. "The son of man has not where to lay his head." Here also Ramakrishna is our great

exemplar. His fingers actually twisted at the touch of gold and he lived on what came to him without his asking.

What is true of lust and gold is also true of other passions. I have taken them piecemeal for the sake of convenience but they all go together.

I hope I have made my position perfectly clear. Now a question arises, and I have seen this question seriously put. The question is that if total renunciation be the ideal, then the ideal is surely a negative one (*neti-mulak*). Where is joy in this ideal? Is it not a text of the Upanishads—*Ananda rupam amritam yadvibhati* (That which reveals itself as bliss) and does not the text apply to *Brahman*? I do not propose to say anything particular about *Brahman* in this paper—*saguna* (with attributes) or *nirguna* (without attributes); *sakara* (form-ful) or *nirakara* (formless). Suffice it to say that no earthly joy can compare with the joy of *Mukti* (liberation)—*Yallabdhwa chaparam labham manyate nadhikam tata* (after gaining which there is nothing more for us to gain—after gaining which all desire ceases). Suffice it to say that *Vairagyam* (detachment or renunciation) is the secret of fearlessness, the secret of strength, for all fear arises from *asakti* (attachment)—*Sarvam vastu bhayanvitam bhuvi vairagyamevabhayam* (Everything is the cause of fear—it is detachment or renunciation alone that is the secret of fearlessness). This joy of *Mukti*, this fearlessness of *Mukti*, is a fact borne out by the great lives of all emancipated souls. Only we must bear in mind that bliss, joy or *anadam* is the last word of moral life, the last word of *sadhana* (religious exercises)—it is the state of *Moksha* or *Nirvana*. The first imperatives of moral life are negative and they cannot but be so. Eucken in his *Truth of Religion* has very satisfactorily explained this fact. The first movement of moral or spiritual life is what he calls the negative movement or rejection which is the same thing as *Vairagya Sadhana* in Sanskrit. Mahatma Gandhi did his best to explain this truth to Rabindranath, the æsthetician and Brama-Samajist, in his well-known article, "The Poet's Anxiety," that appeared in his *Young India* sometime ago, but God only knows whether the poet is convinced or not.

It will not do to be in a hurry for *anadam* before we have entered on the very first stage of moral life. We feel *anadam* as we advance, through the ungrudging approval of

our conscience—and absolute bliss can but come to a man when *Nirvana* is an accomplished fact. THIS IS THE WISDOM OF INDIA. *Vishayanandam* (fleeting joys arising from the world of sense) must be sharply distinguished from *paramanandam* (the supreme bliss of liberation). "*Brahman* is *anandam*, *Brahman* is *rasa* (joy), *ergo*, for God's sake, eat, drink and be merry" is a sentiment which is the very quintessence of superficiality. Even Mark Tapley could not be jolly in the thriving city of Eden, but our optimists have out-Tapleyed Tapley himself—and to the credit of Tapley, be it said, that he was an honest fellow after all. The moral value of this sort of optimism I leave it to my readers to determine. It will not do to say unctuously :

"God's in His Heaven

All's right with the world."

There is another very amusing objection that is most seriously raised. It is asked in all solemnity : "If absolute chastity with absolute poverty is the ideal and if everyone follows that ideal, then what will become of the world with its man-power, politics, empire, army, navy, commerce, industry, theatre, cinema, music-hall, sports, games—in short, all the hurry and scurry of life ? Evidently these things will clean disappear." It is a very grandfatherly question, no doubt, for our grandfathers in India are very keen on the question of the propagation of the species, and marriage they look upon as a religious duty for all. To this question, the holy men who have renounced all will say in reply : "Well, if such a state of things really comes about, if the world really ceases to function through the practice of unbroken *Brahmacharya* (absolute chastity), then what can be a happier consummation than this ? If the whole world attains *Mukti* (liberation) in this way, then what more remains to be desired ? The very purpose of life will then have been fulfilled. But as it appears from the tendencies of the times, there is very little apprehension on this score. Propagation of the species is going on at top speed and will most probably go on at this rate till the final dissolution against our will. IT IS THE DOING OF NATURE. The true ideal of life has nothing to do with it."

So far I have tried to show that moral life springs from Pessimism or deep sorrow and deep discontent with Nature. the end of moral life is *Sannyasa* or absolute renunciation and

that is why *Sannyasa* is the highest ideal of man. Most people, no doubt, will say that it is a very difficult ideal to follow, and some will go even so far as to say that it is quite impossible. All that can be said in reply is that the difficulty of the ideal is patent to all—*durgam pathastat kavayo vadanti* (strait is the path the sages say); were it easy like a joy-ride, it would be no ideal at all, but it is not altogether impossible, because it is a fact that there ARE men who are the embodiments of this ideal though numerically they are but a handful. In the words of Ram Prasad : “One or two only in a million can finish their play and smilingly, O Divine Mother, clappst Thou Thy hands.” That being so, some will say : “Why not lower the ideal a little so that it may be possible for many to realise it in life ?” The answer to such would be this : “No, that can never be ; if you lower the ideal, your realisation will be lower still, and man’s misery will know no bounds.” In the words of Ramakrishna to his disciples : “If I do sixteen annas, then only will you be able to do one anna, but if I do one anna, you will do nothing at all.” Suppose a University student who wants to pass his examination. If he aims at a first-class, he may take a third-class at least, but if he aims at a third-class, his failure is almost inevitable. He gets ploughed, ten to one, that is all. Let us take care that we never lower the ideal and let us see that we never become such consummate hypocrites as to deny the ideal itself, because it is hard or because we do not find it in the lives of the founders of certain sects to which we may happen to belong. A very strict watch over the mind is absolutely necessary. Let us be kind to others but give no quarter to ourselves. Introspection should pierce our soul as a blade of steel. Let us never seek to justify ourselves but always think of what we are and what we ought to be, what we are doing and what we ought to do, and what an abysmal chasm lies between the actual and the ideal.

That the ideal is hard was very well-known to the rishis of India, but they never denied or belittled the ideal. On the contrary, their emphasis was here, for they knew very well that *no emphasis is necessary where natural tendency is strong*, that emphasis should lie the other way about. Hegel’s In-and-Through which everybody understands was certainly very well-known to them. Very well did they know that everyone has not the capacity to renounce all and the vast majority of men who are weak must pass through Nature, but

what they never tired of repeating was that total renunciation is the ideal we must steadily keep in view and try to control our natural impulses as far as possible, for otherwise, we shall hopelessly degenerate into so many worshippers of Belial and Mammon making the world hideous. Hence comes the Hindu conception of CHATURVARGA (four-fold category)—*dharma* (moral law), *artha* (means), *kama* (desire) and *moksha* (liberation)—the plain meaning of which is that it is by restraining *artha* and *kama* by *dharma* that we should turn the current of our lives towards *Moksha* or liberation, the goal of our lives. Bhagawan Ramakrishna used to tell his householder disciples to “turn the current of their lives” (*mod ferano*). *Grihashtasrama* (the householder's life) should be nothing but this. It has no meaning unless it is in tune with the Absolute, unless we turn our face towards the Great Liberation. Like the conception of *Chatur-varga*, we have the conception of *chatur-asrama* (four-fold stage of life) and the conception of *chatur-varnya* (four-fold caste) according to *guna* (aptitude) and *karma* (work) and not necessarily according to heredity. But what has that great soul got to do with In-and-Trough who has subdued and transcended Nature and holds *Moksha* in the hollow of his hand *hastamalakavat* (like the small *amalaki* fruit in one's grasp)—and what right have we to say that everyone must practise In-and-Through so that we may have the satisfaction to see everyone like us? If a man is exceptionally strong, he will do nothing of the kind. If a big jump enables us to get to a place, where, then, is the necessity for wearily trudging all the way? What folly can be greater than this? Evolution in spiritual life any more than evolution in physical life does not necessarily mean gradualism, for Nature does make jumps and does march by leaps and bounds as nations do in periods of Revolution. It is not only Huxley but De Vries also who thinks so, and the theory of De Vries has been quoted by Bergson in his *Creative Evolution*. William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* speaks of slow spiritual progress and quick spiritual progress as well. The former corresponds to the ‘*lisis*’, and the latter to the ‘*crisis*’ of medical science according to James, and the simile of James here is very appropriate, for it reminds us of what we call *bhava-roga* or ‘world-disease’ in Bengali.

In our shastras, there are texts in praise of *grihashtasram*, and this is as it should be, if *grihashtasram* is rightly under-

stood ; but there are *Samhitas* (institutes or codes of law-givers) in which *grihasthasram* has been made compulsory for all and has been raised even above *sannyasa* and this, I submit, is wrong and no Hindu can accept such dictum as authoritative, for it is in conflict with the *Sruti* or Vedic revelation, and according to the Hindu canon of exegesis, wherever the *Sruti* clashes with the *Smriti*, it is the *Smriti* that must go to the wall and the *Sruti* prevail. The clearest *Sruti* text on this subject is *Yadahareva virajeta tadahareva pravrajeta* which means that the moment *vairagyam* dawns upon you, you should adopt *sannyasa*, or in other words, you may become a *sannyasin* without being a house-holder at all. This text has been quoted sometimes by Swami Vivekananda, and that the right interpretation is that given above appears also from the commentary on the text by that profound vedic scholar, Swami Dayananda Saraswati in his *Rig-veda Bhashya Bhumika, Varnasrama prakarana*, which I bring prominently to the notice of Lala Lajpat Rai, his disciple, who, from his place as President of the Hindu Mahasabha just held at Calcutta, spoke as follows : " No one is allowed to become a *sannyasin* or to undertake the duties of a preacher without having passed through the mill of *grihasthasram*."

As for the superiority of *Sannyasa* over *grihasthasram*, the clearest text is this :

Meru Sasapayor yat yat
Surya khadyotayoriva,
Sarit Sagarayor yat yat,
Tatha bhikshu grihasthaya.

(*Yogopanishad, sloka 109*)

(The difference between a *Sannyasin* and a *Grihi* is to be compared to the difference between the Meru Mountain and the mustard-seed, the sun and the fire-fly, the streamlet and the sea).

Many other texts may be quoted, but the two characteristic texts I have given are enough.

Whether one can become a *Sannyasin* without being a *Grihi* and whether a *Sannyasin* is a higher being than a house-holder is a very vital question, and its spiritual significance tremendous. The reason why a man talks so glibly about the compulsory character of *grihasthasram* is that he does not care for *Sannyasasram* at all. He knows that a *grihi* always

remains a *grihi* under the present circumstances of the country, and that, once in the mill, it is almost impossible for a man to come out of it. It might have been different in the ancient days, but now for a *grihi* to become a *Sannyasin* is nothing short of a miracle. The talk of the compulsory character of *grihasthasrama* is nothing but a dodge to kill *Sannyasa* itself. A man's whole spiritual outlook can be judged by his attitude towards the question as to whether it is permitted to a man to skip *Grihasthasrama* and become a *Sannyasin* at a bound. That is why Mr. C. F. Andrews whom we all love and who is a disciple of Rabindranath—he calls Rabindranath his *Guru-deva* though he appeals now and then to the practical vedanta and Mayavada of Swami Vivekananda—, that is why, I say, Mr. C. F. Andrews was quite puzzled and perplexed, for this is a question on which Rabindranath differs from Mahatma Gandhi. Absolute continence is the watch-word of the Mahatma, but Rabindranath must have romance and marriage by all means. So Mr. Andrews, in his perplexity, wrote an article in the *Modern Review* of Calcutta sometime ago and invited authoritative opinion as to the true Hindu view of the question. A certain correspondent, if I remember aright, quoted one of the very texts quoted above and wrote something very much to the point, but in the next issue, another correspondent quoted certain *Smriti* texts in support of Rabindranath, and then the learned editor whose sympathies are well known, in the exercise of his editorial prerogative, closed the discussion with the verdict that Rabindranath is right. Whether Rabindranath is right or the Mahatma is right is a matter I leave to my readers to decide. I only hope that they will weigh all the arguments I have advanced before they come to a conclusion.

Relative morality, that is, 'domestic, social, political and business morality has no meaning at all without asceticism as its foundation. The Relative presupposes the Absolute. Yet the most astounding charge ever brought is that asceticism is anti-social. A more erroneous and perverse charge it is hard to conceive. Social welfare will be best secured, if the spirit of asceticism is rightly grasped. What is social justice and political justice without which social and political reform can never be accomplished? It means giving every man his due or in other words renouncing one's lion's share so that others may not suffer. Evil means the principle of individuation or selfish monopoly. Good means altruism. Renounce

you will, however little, for social and political well-being, glibly you will talk of morality, social and political, and yet the fundamental principle of all such morality you will not accept—well, it is an instance of perversity the like of which we fail to see in the whole history of mental aberrations. There is no cause of fear whatever. None of your pet interests—social reform, political agitation, political nationalism, economic progress—none of these things, I am sure, will be left out of account, nay, all these will proceed as smoothly as possible, nothing will go astray, if only we learn to cherish reverence for Total Renunciation—the ideal of ideals. Art will be ennobled and purified by it, and Democracy will be transformed by its magic touch. Art without morality is pornography, and Democracy without reverence is mobocracy. TAKE CARE OF QUALITATIVE REALISATION AND QUANTITATIVE REALISATION WILL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF.

Asceticism is not—it cannot be—anti-social. What is the VERDICT OF HISTORY? Who have been the greatest benefactors of the world? Whose hearts have more freely bled at the spectacle of human misery? Who, I ask, have built up the great ETHICS OF PITY? Has Lord Buddha with his *Bhikshus* clean vanished from our recollection? Who were the soul of the great universities of Nalanda and Taxilla, of thousands of orphanages, rest-houses and hospitals for animals and men? Shall we forget the Catholic monks of Medieval Europe because of the brag and bounce of the Protestants of the present day? Not so did Carlyle. His Past and Present proves what I say. All the philanthropic activities of the Middle Ages—religious, educational and sanitary no less than the work of poor-relief—were theirs and theirs alone. But for them what would have become of the vaunted civilisation of the west? Where would have been the continuity of European History from the Hellenic times to the present day? When the barbarian hordes of Europe—Goths, Visi-Goths and Vandals—carried fire and sword before them and laid everything low and the Roman Empire with all her traditions shrieked and tottered to its fall, then who were the people who hugged to their heart and rescued from universal wreck the works of Aristotle and Plato, Homer and Virgil? It is true that much corruption subsequently crept into the life of the Church and the lives of the monks, but that is not the fault of the ideal. *Corruptio optimi pessima.* Perhaps never in the history of man irreligion and hypocrisy have run so rampant in any

department of life as in that of religion but is that any reason why religion itself should be abolished? Reform by all means when reformation is necessary but *reformation is not deformation*. The true reformation of the Church might have been that of Savonarola, but Savonarola failed and was burnt at the stake. Luther's success was due more to political reasons but he was a much lesser man than Savonarola. The cardinal mistake of Luther was the abolition of monasticism itself and the result is the frank materialism of Modern Europe. Let us return now to India. After skipping several centuries since the rise of Buddhism we stand face to face with that *avatar* of *Bhakti*, Lord Chaitanya of Bengal, who renounced all for the sake of his Krishna and whose message was that of kindness to all—love for all. Coming then to our own times, we see before us the dominating personality of SWAMI VIVEKANANDA who with a single stamp of his foot has left his impress upon history, whose thought is moulding the mind of India to-day—Vivekananda the hero, Vivekananda the prophet, Vivekananda the saint, Vivekananda the patriot, Vivekananda the world-teacher, the 'mighty-mouthed' expounder of Universal Religion, the "cyclonic monk," the "paragon of Vedantic missionaries," the "Napoleon of Religion," the very genius of Hinduism incarnate. We feel his force and are struck with it, but very few of us have the insight to see the sorrow he felt for man and his abounding love for all. It is his sorrow that became his force for TRUE FORCE IS NOTHING BUT SORROW TURNED DYNAMIC. He was not one of your mealy-mouthed optimists or deluded meliorists. He boldly delivered the message of *Mukti* from the bondage of *Maya* and his voice was like the roaring of the lion, "like the sound of the sea." The generalissimo of Ramakrishna, his God-intoxicated Master, it was Vivekananda the Sannyasin who founded the Ramakrishna Mission and brought into being a new order of monks who are not only interpreting his message in the East and in the West as preachers on platforms and creating a literature which to many is the consolation of life and consolation of death but are also the pioneers of all true constructive work in the country, who form the vanguard of relief-forces in times of dire calamity and who sacrifice their lives without a word of demur before the mad rush of flood, terrible epidemics and grim famines like the true soldiers of a great commander. "Theirs is not to question why, theirs it is to do and die." Silent workers all—no fuss, self-advertisement or newspaper-puffing. *Daridra*

Narayan (the poor who are our God) is a term we have learnt from Vivekananda, the true spirit of *seva* (service) he it is who has brought home to us—service through renunciation—and he it is who has taught us again to see the Self everywhere in Brahmin and Pariah, in Hindu, Moslem and Christian alike. It is he who tackled before all the problem of untouchability and by democratising religion and without antagonising the Hindus gave Social Reform a new meaning and a new direction. No foppish business this, and Vivekananda was a *sannyasin*. His monks have started schools for the depressed, opened hospitals for the sick and introduced industrial education in villages to make the poor self-supporting. They could have done more if they had not been thwarted by the materialistic enemies of SANNYASA AS AN INSTITUTION. In the face of all this, can we have the effrontery to say that *sannyasa* is anti-social? Because there are hundreds of vagabonds masquerading as *sannyasins* and imposing on the credulity of honest citizens, therefore it does not follow that *sannyasa* should be condemned. Cheats are cheats and should be treated as such—house-holder cheats with all their “respectability” and the so-called *sadhus* preying upon the community. Even now there is a *sannyasin* who is giving a good shaking to India and whose movements are watched with bated breath in all parts of the globe. A *grihi* he once was but no longer can he be called a *grihi* though his grown-up sons and wife live about him, for sex-life he has subdued and a loin-cloth is his only wear. To the Rajarshi type he does not certainly belong, if a Rajarshi is what he is made out to be. MAHATMA GANDHI is the *sannyasin* whom I here mean. The Mahatma is a Hindu, he is proud that he is a Hindu and yet tolerant to all. He does not belong to any reforming sect and yet he is a great reformer. *The only difference between the Mahatma and a Hindu in the full sense of the term* is that the *Kshatriya's dharma* based on justice and chivalry which occupies an important place in the Hindu's scheme of life has no place in the Mahatma's scheme at all. Here he is a Tolstoyist—an uncompromising Tolstoyist. It is also rightly said by his critics that he is not discriminate in the choice of his followers and is not particular about their fitness for the life of his ideal or in other words, he does not recognise the principle of *adhikara-bheda* and presses into his service all who are keen only on political *swaraj*, who are indifferent to that which is of supreme value to him and swear by non-violence only from policy. He wants to

subordinate politics to religion. His followers want to subordinate religion to politics. Nor can I blame his followers for their frailties, as political swaraj at a very early date he put in the fore-front of his programme. No wonder that so many flocked to him and talked of non-violence till non-violence became a cant. A true Hindu knows that everyone cannot be non-violent any more than everyone can be a *sannyasin*—even for the sake of swaraj. Had the Mahatma been nothing but a religious preacher and had he not behind him the record of his South African struggles, I doubt very much whether he would have had a hundredth part of the following he commanded in 1920. The split in his camp is due to his lack of insight with all the honesty of his purpose. The DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GANDHI AND VIVEKANANDA lies in the fact that Vivekananda's insight was much keener and common-sense much stronger. Vivekananda became a *sannyasin* without being a *grihi* at all—and non-resistance under all circumstances is the *sannyasin's* ideal—but very well did he know that everyone cannot be a *sannyasin* and therefore the *Kshatriya's dharma* he never rejected as he never sought to abolish the life of the house-holder. As the house-holder is permitted to beget and own property, so he is permitted to resist when resistance is necessary. This may be a concession to human weakness, but the concession *has* to be made. *This is common sense.* Only the house-holder must never forget the ideal of *sannyasa* and try to approximate to it as far as possible, or in other words, lust, greed and violence he must keep under proper control. This is *dharma* and *dharma* is nothing but a stepping-stone to *Moksha*. The path to *Moksha* is never through *adharma* but through *dharma* alone and when *Moksha* is reached all moral struggle ceases. Man is then the super-man but not in the Nietzschean sense of the term. He is the super-man because he is above the world of relativity—out of the vicious circle. He may do work for the good of others but *Karma* is no bondage to him. Such a man's work can never be an evil. Swami Vivekananda knew all this. The true spirit of *Varnasrama Dharma* he fully recognised. Mahatma Gandhi is an idealist, but a practical idealist he is not, in spite of his claim. Practical idealist is a term that may be rightly applied to Swami Vivekananda alone in this age of confusion of ideas. To the misfortune of the country, the great Swami passed away at a very early age. He had just time to deliver his message and lay the foundation of his uplifting work. The man has not yet arrived to apply

all his ideas to life. If Mahatma Gandhi prepares the ground for the descent of that Saviour, he is welcome by all means. The first requisite for the nation is a severe conception of life, the spirit of stern self-restraint. *No nation-building without man-making*—that is clear ; and the Swami's emphasis was on man-making which is another name for his "*root-and-branch reform*". But whether man-making will be developed through the excitement of political agitation in its present form, through the mischievous activities of blatant demagogues, is a matter about which I have very grave doubts. Mahatma Gandhi also sees this now, he sees that there is a considerable waste of the nation's energy and human materials, he sees that the nation is going hopelessly astray—and this is the secret of his present emphasis on constructive work—an emphasis that came from Swami Vivekananda a quarter of a century ago and the Swami never perpetrated a "Himalayan blunder". I would rather not compare the realisations, powers and personalities of the two men.

It is abundantly clear from what has been said above that *Sannyasa* is not anti-social, but if anybody expects a *Sannyasin* to be a boon companion and that sort of thing, he must be sorely disappointed. One reason for the prevailing impression of *Sannyasa* being anti-social appears to me to be the existence of a certain class of *Sannyasins* who live in solitude and practise their *sadhana* in places far from the busy haunts of men. To their own *Mukti* they *can* attain and *do* attain in fact, but the power to save others and do good to humanity they do not possess. Such *Sannyasins* are called "pratyek Buddhas" in Buddhist literature. In the words of Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna, "they are like small chips of wood that can float across to the other shore of the sea, but those who after realising themselves in solitude come back to the world to save other souls and do good to man are like the huge logs that can not only float across themselves but carry on their surface others as well." But that does not justify us in saying that those solitary souls are anti-social—souls that have cut off all connection with the world, who are civilly dead and beyond our ideas of good and evil. Their life may appear to us to be a life of inaction but their spirit of detachment is not wholly without a moral, for "the world is too much with us." Nor does it appear reasonable to class them with do-nothings because the nature of their work is beyond our ken. Of the subtle power of the spirit very little

indeed do we know. Then, as for the mere utilitarian's good of the world about which our talk is so loud, all that can be said is that it is what Carlyle regards as "philanthropy without sense." Do we ever stop to think as to who can do the greater good—men immersed in the world or men who have renounced all and dedicated themselves to the cause of humanity? It is a truth the man who runs may see. But how can *we* see at all—*we* who have learnt from Modern Europe, the Protestant Europe, the Mammon-worshipping, industrial, mechanical, imperialistic and chauvinistic Europe that *sannyasa* is anti-social? Modernism indeed! The time has come for us to shake off our contemptible slave-mentality, the soul-killing hypnotism induced by the West and to boldly assert ourselves as men.

I do not know when Europe will be able to harmonise the claims of activism and quietism. For the true relation between *karma* and *naishkarmya* the *Bhagavat-Gita* is our only guide.

I have dwelt at such length on asceticism or *sannyasa*, because the culmination of pessimism is ascetic morality or absolute renunciation and what is ordinarily called morality, or, in other words, domestic, social, political and economic morality, without which civilisation is a mockery, has no meaning without reference to the higher morality of *Sannyasa*. What is ordinarily called morality, consistently followed, leads ultimately to this. *Dharma* is nothing but a stepping-stone to *Moksha*. All the super-theistic, theistic and anti-theistic systems of India, with all their differences, are unanimous in their support of two things, namely Pessimism and Asceticism. The hedonism or *pushti-marga* of Charvaka need not be taken seriously at all. It has no influence on the religious thought of India. Leaving then Charvakism out of account when we come to the chief anti-theistic systems of the Sankhya, Bauddha and Jaina schools, we see that, though anti-theistic, they are idealistic beyond a doubt. *The concept of God is not the common factor of our religions and schools of philosophy. The common factor is Pessimism and Asceticism. This is the sādhanā of India, this is the ground-note of our culture, this the spirit of our civilisation.* The Absolute or *Ekamevādvītyam* (One without a second) of the super-theistic Vedānta, the pluralism or *puruṣa bahava* of the God-less Sankhya, the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems with their God as the merely efficient cause (*nimitta kāraṇa*), the *an-atmanism* and Heraclitean flux (*sunyavāda* and *kṣhanika-vijñānavāda*) of Hīna-yānist Buddhism, and the frank atheism

of the Jaina are all agreed on THREE ESSENTIALS and they are these : (1) life is full of misery ; (2) desire is the cause of our sufferings and (3) the eradication of desire (*trishna*) is the end of our life, variously called Moksha, Nirvana, Kaivalya and Apavarga. If there is any UNDISPUTED TRUTH IN OUR COUNTRY, it is this. That is why it has been said :—

*Veda vibhinna, Smritayo vibhinna
Nasou muniryasya matam na bhinnam.
Dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhayam
Mahajano yena gato sa pantha.*

(Vedas differ, Smritis differ, Rishis differ, the metaphysic of ethics is hidden beyond our gaze. The path trodden by the great souls is the only path for us).

The most noteworthy point in the above *sloka* is the use of the singular number in the word PANTHA (path) which can have one meaning only, viz., that all differences of opinion about the metaphysic of ethics (*dharmasya tattvam*) notwithstanding, there is no difference whatever as to the ethical ideal or the meaning of life, for all great souls have trodden but one path and that path is no other than the path of *tyaga* (RENUNCIATION). The different paths of Bhagawan Ramakrishna or the Bhagavad-Geeta or the different paths mentioned in the famous *mahimna stotra* known to every Hindu cannot and do not mean that there can be any path other than that of renunciation. What they all mean is that there are different methods of realisation (*sadhana-marga*), such as Jnana, Bhakti, Karma and Yoga and there is devotion to different kinds of ISHTAM. The *Ishtam* may mean any form or conception of God, *avatar* (like Buddha, Christ, etc.), saint, the Sovereign Self which is all in all or *Nirvana* which is both negative and positive. *This is our conception of Universal Religion*. We, Vedantists, claim that all paths ultimately lead to *One Reality which alone is*, and systems and faiths other than ours are imperfect but contain elements of truth and therefore need not be wholly rejected. The most important elements of truth in other systems are, according to us, Pessimism and Asceticism. Any religion or any philosophy, including the *vaunted dogmatic mono-theism*, which does not contain these two elements or denies them, is totally false and is to be wholly rejected. Our chief quarrel is with the *anti-pessimistic and anti-ascetic mono-theism which is the fashionable creed to-day all over the world in some form or other and which is a manifest fraud*.

We can tolerate the denial of God but what we can never tolerate is the denial of that which gives a meaning and purpose to our life. MORALITY CAN EXIST AND DOES EXIST WITHOUT THE CONCEPT OF GOD. That is why Swami Vivekananda once said in my presence : “ *An honest atheist is a thousand times better than a hypocritical theist.* ” Why take the name of God in vain ? If you really loved God, you would renounce everything for His sake or at least confess your weakness and not seek to justify yourself. “ It is not by saying Lord ! Lord ! but by doing the will of the Father in Heaven ” that the kingdom of God becomes accessible to you. As for the man who does not do His will, the gate of that kingdom will be slammed in his face. If you believe in God's omniscience, you ought to know that all the praying rogues and canting humbugs are known to Him but too well. I know many theists in India who talk of the *maddhya patha* (the middle path) of Lord Buddha to justify themselves but the *maddhya patha* of Lord Buddha is not the Golden Mean of Aristotle. It implies the absolute chastity and absolute poverty of Lord Buddha's life after the Great Renunciation. Only it deprecates the cruel torturing of the flesh.

The BHAKTI-CULT of India based on the Qualified Non-Dualistic and Dualistic systems of philosophy with Personal God as the ultimate reality appeals to the Christian Orientalists of the West, because anthropomorphism is the basis of Christian Theology. Their optimistic or melioristic bias also inclines them in favour of the *leelarasa* of the Vaishnava, though their interpretation of *leela-rasa* is false and unacceptable. But it is not only they but also certain *vaishnavas* of our country including the so-called NEO-VAISHNAVAS OF BENGAL most of whom are England-returned barristers and journalists who interpret *leela-rasa* in this way for reasons I need not explain. These Neo-Vaishnavas say in season and out of season that they are not *tyaga-margis* but *rag-margis*, or in other words, the *leela* of God, which is MANIFESTED in the sense-world and therefore not *Maya* which veils and conceals, is something to be fully enjoyed and that is how God is to be realised. The disreputable low-class *neras* and *neris** of Bengal and their brethren in other parts of India also understand *leela-rasa* in this sense and their dissolute life is a reproach to the country and a disgrace to the nation. But is this the *Vaishnavism* of

*A class of degenerate Vaishnava beggars of Bengal, a corrupt off-shoot of the Chaitanya movement.

Chaitanya-Deva, the *avatar* of *bhakti* and *prema* (devotion and love) ? Does not Vaishnava mean *vairagi* or one who has renounced the world ? What can possibly be the inner meaning of Chaitanya's *sannyasa* ? Why did he indignantly repudiate his disciple Haridas the younger ? *There can be no prema (love) without tyaga (sacrifice)*. How can a selfish man love anyone but himself ? As long as there is the least desire for worldly enjoyment, so long *Krishna-prema* is impossible. Says Bhagawan Ramakrishna : " It is not by saying 'love, 'love' that love comes to you. *Krishna-prema* made Sri Chaitanya see Vrindaban in every forest and the Yamuna in all streams. " The conclusion is thus inevitable that *even our Bhakti-cult is pessimistic, for this also leads to Sannyasa*. The only difference is that there is *too much softness and lachrymosity in this cult of Bhakti* and it would not be too much to say that the less this cult is spread the better for the country. What *India wants now is not softness but hardness—aye, the hardness of steel*. What is wanted now is a little less stress on the flute of Sri Krishna and a little more stress on his *Sankha* (conch) and *Chakra* (discus) ; a little less stress on the Sri Krishna of Braja-leela, the Sri Krishna of the Pastoral,

" Whose artful strains have oft delayed

The huddling brook to hear his madrigal, "

but the Sri Krishna of Kurukshetra, the inspirer of Arjuna and the Pandava host. The time has come, it seems, for the nation to hear once more the clarion-call of the Gita, the trumpet of Mahadeva and the roaring of the lion of the Vedanta. That feeling, rightly understood, is good for us I have already said, but of feeling we must remember there is a multitude of varieties. Different feelings must be cultivated according to time, place and circumstance, but the goal we must steadily keep in view. The goal is Mukti.

My thesis amounts to this : that Pessimism is the only true view of life and all the arguments that can be advanced in support of this view I have frankly placed before my readers. Actual experience (*pratyaksha*), Inference (*anumana*) and the wisdom of sages (*apta-vakya*) are the chief methods of proof to which I have throughout appealed. These are the three chief pillars on which Hindu methodology rests. I have shown that moral life is impossible without a pessimistic view of life. Are we going to be ashamed because Modern Europe sneers at the philosophy of Pessimism ? It is something of which we should be legitimately proud. It is a clear

proof of the moral earnestness (*dharma-nishtha*) of the Hindu race. The keenness of our intellect, our metaphysical subtlety and gentle quietism Europe readily concedes but what the Europeans do not so readily acknowledge is the active moral life of India. They think that that is a quality which is the monopoly of the Christians and the Jews. That is why Hebraism is the name they have applied to the quality. Hebraism and Hellenism are terms that have been much popularised by Matthew Arnold, the apostle of "Sweetness and Light," the high-priest in charge of "the ark of culture." European civilisation is the product of their admixture. Both these elements are conspicuous in the civilisation of India. We have no need to go to Europe for the acquisition of these, and so far as Hebraism is concerned, we may very well claim to be the teachers of Europe. Our Hebraism is far superior to the Hebraism of the Jews, for it does not depend on a "living and jealous God" dwelling in Heaven or the craven fear of an eternal Hell. It depends entirely on the manhood of man. It is not national like the Hebraism of the Jew. It has a higher claim to universality than Christianity itself, for the motive power of Christian morality is not Duty for Duty's sake but Duty for the sake of Heaven and Duty from fear of Hell. It is "slave morality" as opposed to the "master morality" of the Hindu and this "master morality" is not the Satanic ideal of Nietzsche. If Nietzsche after graduating in the school of Schopenhauer had prosecuted his post-graduate studies in the atmosphere of India, his philosophy would have been a different thing altogether and the "transvaluation of his values" would have been a different kind of transvaluation. He would have found his super-man but in another sense. Wherever men will be honest seekers after Truth, they will have to accept Hindu Ethics willy-nilly—, it matters very little whether they like to be called Hindus or not.

Our political subjection and social evils are not due to our philosophy and religion. Swami Vivekananda was ever tired of repeating this truth. It is the decline of the influence of our philosophy and religion and the perversion of the truths they contain that have brought us to this sad pass. Raja Rammohan, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, did not understand this cardinal fact though he studied all our Shastras and really meant well. True it is that he was the first to translate into Bengali the Upanishads and the *Sankara-bhashya* of the

Vedanta. It is also true that he talked of *Nirguna Brahma* now and then. Yet a man of realisation he emphatically was not, for the practice of *Vairagya*, which is the secret of vision and which alone can enable a man to catch the spirit of the Shastras, is not to be found anywhere in his life. In accepting the suggestion of David Hare to introduce Western education in the country systematically and on a large scale and in approaching the Government in this behalf he did well, no doubt, for a comparative study of the two types of culture is necessary for us to appreciate the greatness of our achievements, but that is a matter for which his services need not be exaggerated in as much as Western education on a small scale had already been introduced by the Christian missionaries of Serampore and it would have been more widely spread sooner or later without the least effort of Raja Rammohan to support its claim. As long as it is England's political necessity and as long as England produces philistines like Macaulay so long Western education will not be without its champion. Western science we gladly welcome. Had India been free like Japan, the dissemination of Western science might have been wider and quicker and her contribution to science, the development of which was arrested a few centuries ago, might have been much greater still. But there is something greater than science. What, therefore, is most objectionable is the Raja's disparagement of our philosophy and religion in the petition he addressed to Lord Amherst, the then Governor-General of India, though in justice to him it must be said that he was not a snob but had self-respect enough to stand in defence of Hinduism when it was unfairly attacked by the Christian missionaries, the kith and kin of the ruling civilians. If Hinduism had been false, he need not have defended it from patriotic motives, but it is more true than he ever imagined. He had yet to know that the highest realisation can come to a man even through the worship of images if his heart is in the right place, though image-worship is not compulsory for a Hindu. The defence of Hinduism he attempted therefore was a halting performance. He paid the Christian Missionaries back in their own coin by attacking Trinitarianism and by showing that it is not far removed from Hindu "idolatry." He composed a song that reminds us of Shakespeare's lines :

" We are such stuff

As dreams are made on ; and our little life

Is rounded with a sleep. "

But in the very next breath he said that India had gone to the dogs through her doctrine of Maya. Maya-vada, the greatest doctrine the world has ever produced, is not at all responsible for our country's degradation and the Jesus of the pamphlet Raja Rammohan wrote, entitled *The Precepts of Jesus : The Way to Peace and Happiness*, is not at all necessary for our country's salvation, though every true Hindu has respect for Jesus as He comes up to our ideal of a perfect *Sannyasin*. How dynamic is the doctrine of Maya, how inestimable its moral value, I have already shown in this paper. Let me but add that *Advaita-vada* (non-dualism), the great doctrine, "Thou art That," the counterpart and positive aspect of the negative doctrine of Maya, is not Pantheism as many people erroneously believe. "A-cosmic Pantheism" it may be called though the term is awkward and reminiscent of a "circular square." That moral life cannot stand on Pantheism is quite clear from the glaring inconsistency between the Ethics and Metaphysics of the system of Spinoza. Because Nature is unmoral, therefore Pantheism is false. The All of *Sarvam khalvidam Brahma* is not the All of Pantheism but the All of Advaita. Nor should *Advaita-vada* be mistaken for the Monism of Europe with its anti-ascetic morality—the monism with its fancied harmony between the Unseen and the Seen, the monism with its apotheosis of the Concrete Universal. The Pragmatism and the Pluralism of James are a thousand times better and more vital than this sort of Monism. Bradley writes his *Appearance and Reality*. From the first part of the book it appears that he is approaching our *Maya-vada*. But what do we find in the latter part of the book and in his later work as a whole? The answer we find in the following words of Muirhead: "Though all these things are not the realities they sometimes appear, yet they are the appearances of reality and if we do not find it in them we shall not find it anywhere at all. It is this voice that speaks in the latter part of the book (*Appearance and Reality*) and in his (Bradley's) later work as a whole (*Mind*, April, 1925, pp. 183-184)."

Raja Rammohan never truly understood *Advaita-vada* nor could he enter into the spirit of the other schools of Hinduism through the want of *Vairagya* in his life. The Hebrew Bible and the Greek Bible Raja Rammohan may have read, but he could not enter into the spirit of Christianity either, for to understand Christianity a man must understand the spirit

of renunciation above all. The Raja passed through the phase of French Illumination and Deism and at last accepted Unitarianism as final. The Mono-theism of Islam also appealed to him. Unitarianism, Arianism or Socinianism which was once the religion of the Vandal barbarians is not the last word of Christianity. It does not appear that the Raja was ever acquainted with the religious experience of a Christian saint like St. Francis of Assisi. That is why with all his reading of the Vedas and Vedanta he found his final resting place in Unitarianism - cum - Mono-theism - cum-Protestantism - cum-Eclecticism and it is on that foundation that he presumed to build the fabric of Universal Religion. The Raja was a Mono-theist and his mono-theistic interpretation of Hinduism is unacceptable. Hinduism never is and never was co-extensive with Mono-theism. It means much more than Mono-theism and at the same time has a place in the niches of her temple for the Personal and Anthropomorphic God of Mono-theism and all the gods, avatars, prophets and saints worshipped by the Hindus. The Hindus believe in One in Many (Immanent), in One above Many (Transcendent), in One in Many and above Many both (Pan-entheism) and One only (*advaitavada*) which is neither immanent nor transcendent nor immanent and transcendent both, but some sort of One they all accept. Swami Vivekananda's interpretation is that all the different sects and cults and systems have a provisional value but they all lead to *advaita-vada* which is the last word of philosophy and religion—and in our country philosophy and religion are one. Swami Vivekananda's interpretation is based on the facts of actual religious experience. In the words of Emerson, "consciousness moves along a graded plane." What the Hindus are unanimous about is the spirit of renunciation on which they all insist. Dogmatic mono-theism, as we know it, is a very poor affair. It is "a miserable conception" in the words of Plotinus. The last word of Hinduism (as distinguished from Jainism and Buddhism of the *Hina-yana* school) is *Ekamevaadvitiam* (One without a second). But the One of *Ekamevaadvitiam* is neither the One of Mono-theism nor the One of Pan-theism nor the One of the so-called Monism of Modern Europe. It means *atma-tatwa* or the Truth about the Self. It means THAT THOU ART. *This Self is the True Absolute*. It is not the reality that underlies appearances. It is neither the Abstract Universal nor the Concrete Universal. It is not the thing-in-

itself. It does not underlie anything. It does not overlie anything. It appears as Many, but that is *Avidya* (Ne-science). As long as we see the Many, the One is not. When the true Illumination or Self-realisation comes, the world simply vanishes with its manifold. To those who have arrived at this stage "this world which is so real with all its suns and milky ways"—is nothing. It is not merely a philosophy but the greatest fact of religious experience. *Here is the True Absolute, and the Religion which lays down the discipline (Sadhana) for the realisation of this True Absolute is the Absolute Religion and not that which Hegel and Rudolf Eucken make out to be.*

The Universal Religion of Raja Rammohan is a chimera. No Universal Religion can be based on mere rationalistic Mono-theism which rejects Revelation, and even when Mono-theism is based on Revelation—of Revelation there are degrees, the final Revelation being *Adwaita Sruti*—it has no claim to be called Universal Religion, for it rejects the varieties of religious experience and is perhaps the most intolerant creed that has afflicted mankind. Lecky in his *History of European Morals* has pointedly brought home this truth. That which is supposed to be the worst Poly-theism with the worship of Images and Symbols has at least the merit of toleration to commend itself to men. But the vaunted Mono-theism with its colossal pretensions to superiority has no such merit to speak of. It has drenched the earth in human gore. It is against the genius of Hindu civilisation. That is why Raja Rammohan failed and Keshab Chandra Sen failed with all the spirit of their eclecticism, and where Rammohan failed and Keshab failed Rabindranath with his æstheticism is not likely to succeed. Eclecticism is contemptible. Syncretism is colour-less. That is why the Brahmo Samaj to-day is a moribund institution. The house is divided against itself. A tiny, insignificant sect without the ideal of *Sannyasa*, it is split up into three sections not very friendly to one another—and yet the funniest part of the thing is the parade it makes of its so-called cosmopolitanism which is not quite unintelligible, for when a movement is rejected in the country of its origin, it must lean for support on the world without ; but the world knows what is what.

The correct evaluation of Raja Rammohan is that presented by Sir John Woodroffe and Mahatma Gandhi than whom more impartial students it is not easy to conceive. What Sir

John Woodroffe said he said as President at a Rammohan anniversary meeting, and his words came as a sharp rebuke to Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal whose exaggerated and pedantic estimate of Raja Rammohan was more than what Sir John could bear. As for the words of Mahatma Gandhi, they have inflicted a blow from the effects of which the Samaj has not yet recovered.

It is only the other day that Mahatma Gandhi launched his criticism of the Arya Samaj and its most fanatical manual known as *Satyartha Prakash*. The Arya Samaj took the criticism so very seriously that it actually thought of sending a deputation to the Mahatma at Sabarmati. Whether the deputation was actually sent I do not remember. But the Mahatma's criticism disturbed the sleep of Lala Lajpat Rai who issued a very ineffectual protest from his retreat at Geneva. A poorer performance than the Lala's protest it is hard to imagine. Dogmatic mono-theism is the creed of the Arya Samaj of the Punjab, but it differs from the Brahmo Samaj in that it has a backbone that is strong for it recognises *Sannyasa* as the highest ideal of life and accepts Revelation, though its interpretation of the Vedas is vitiated by a bias. It has more life than the Brahmo Samaj of Bengal and, in spite of its grossly vituperative literature, has done more good to the country. In the words of Sir Herbert Risley: "The Aryas start with a definite creed resting upon scriptures of great antiquity and high reputation; their teaching is of a bold and masculine type and is free from the limp eclecticism which has proved fatal to the Brahmo Samaj" (Risley's *People of India*, Edition of 1915, page 254).

Our Pessimism with its resulting conception of Mukti cannot be environmental and temperamental. It is the outcome of profound feeling and deep thought. Where in the world is environment so beautiful and sublime? Such environment is well calculated to make man optimistic, and whoever will survey the history of India will be struck with the festive temperament of her people. The proverbial "thirteen festivals in twelve months" have not yet completely disappeared from the country. What has happened to British India is known only to those who have studied well the present economic and political condition of the country. Many hold that India is getting poorer and poorer and the burden of her sorrows getting heavier and heavier. Sir Michael Sadler who came here the other day mournfully observed: "Smile has departed

from the face of Bengal." But even if it be supposed for the sake of argument that India is really getting happier and her cash balance in the banks is steadily mounting higher, does it follow from such admission that optimism must be the necessary consequence of such a happy state of things? Did the Prince Gautama ever want for anything in his palace with its paraphernalia? It is a pity that such silly stuff occurs in one of the greatest books of the world—I mean, Hastings' Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics.

Now let us compare Pessimism with Optimism. A strict Optimist is he who can say with Leibnitz that everything is best in this best possible world. If anybody really believes in the truth of this dictum, then he should remain perfectly contented with things as they are. That being so, how can he claim to have a moral life at all? Moral life is the logical consequence of Pessimism. Optimism can never give it. Hence Optimism is unacceptable. It is false and is the outcome of thoughtlessness or theological prejudice or both combined.

Let us come to Meliorism next—Meliorism, the prevailing creed of the West to-day, a cross between Optimism and Pessimism, the creed of infinite rectilinear progress, occasional set-backs notwithstanding. That Auguste Comte and Frederic Harrison, his well known disciple, should have entertained this unscientific belief is a matter of extreme regret, to say the least, —and the most surprising thing is that William James, who boldly raised the standard of revolt against the despotism of Hegel, could not shake off the spell of the master-wizard, for Hegel's Meliorism he wholly accepted. When James saw disjunction, the greatest disjunction between moral life and the life of Nature certainly could not have escaped his notice, and in Maya-vada was his true deliverance. He came in contact with Swami Vivekananda, was a great admirer of the Swami but he shrugged his shoulders at the mention of Maya and sought refuge in the pluralistic world. If James had accepted Maya-vada, he might have been the greatest philosopher of the West to-day, for not even Plato and Kant could rise above Dualism proper. Then how Huxley, according to whose premiss there is a yawning gulf between the ethical process and the cosmic process between which no harmony is possible, in whose Biology there is no such thing as infinite progress and whose Evolution means regression and reversion as well—how Huxley, one of the frankest men the world has ever produced,

could at all hold out the melioristic hope, the most illogical conclusion ever seen, is a phenomenon that is simply inconceivable. Is it a case of Tennyson's "believing where we cannot prove"? No "Will to Believe" of James can lead one to such belief. And still one believes—but why? "Prejudice" is the only answer. For a world of so much political progress, so much economic progress, so much Will to Power, such belief is but natural. This is THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MELIORISM. INDIA'S PHILOSOPHY ALONE COULD RISE ABOVE HER ENVIRONMENT. The unscientific character of Meliorism I have already established in this paper. That *it is unhistorical* I also firmly maintain. No historical proof can be adduced in support of this creed. If you talk of a God in History, you will have also to recognise the Devil there. On the broad field of History, a ceaseless battle is raging between God on the one hand and the Devil on the other. Sometimes God emerges victorious, sometimes the Devil. This is the TRUE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY. This view is supported by India's philosophy and this is the conclusion of my historical studies. BARBARISATION OF THE CIVILISED WORLD has happened more than once. What proof is there that barbarisation will not occur again? Many thinkers are of opinion that RE-BARBARISATION IS ALREADY THERE. Carlyle, Ruskin and Tolstoy contemplated with horror the moral degradation of Europe and sounded a note of warning just in time, but theirs was a voice lost in the wilderness. THE LAST EUROPEAN WAR, its disastrous effects and another such diabolical war—no Armageddon—looming in the horizon are facts about which the less said the better. The tall talk of Right and Justice which assails our ears in times of such wars has never deceived any one who knows what is what. Not that we deny that just wars are possible. Just wars and righteous wars we Hindus frankly recognise. Pacifists as a nation we never were—not even in the Buddhist period of our history. KURUKSHETRA we call DHARMA-KSHETRA. The traditions of the Maha-Bharat and Ramayana, the history of the Rajputs, Mahrattas and Sikhs are sources of perennial inspiration to everyone who has the true Hindu blood in his veins. The Kshatriya's *dharma* and the righteous war the Hindus can therefore very well understand. But the last European War and the war not very far off do not show Right and Justice on any side whatever. IF THIS IS NOT RE-BARBARISATION I DO NOT KNOW WHAT IS. Where is then the historical basis of melioristic faith and hope? It is nothing but a poet's

dream—this “Parliament of man and Federation of the world.” All that we can concede in favour of Meliorism is that looked at from the ethical standpoint, it has a pragmatic value of its own, but that is because there is an element of truth in it and that truth belongs to Pessimism. The element of hope in Meliorism—the hope of infinite progress—is no hope at all, because it is the vainest hope as Science and History incontestably prove. And if pragmatic value be at all our test in the matter, then the pragmatic value of Pessimism is decidedly higher, for Pessimism is truth and nothing but truth and Meliorism an illusion, a mirage, the philosopher's fiction and the poet's dream. At first it appears very attractive no doubt, but it melts away as we see it through.

MY ARGUMENT THUS IS TRILEMMATIC. There are three alternatives and not more than three—Optimism, Meliorism and Pessimism. A fourth alternative may be that of blank despair and suicide, but this is not the meaning of Pessimism in philosophy and so it should be ignored altogether. Neither Indian Philosophy nor the Philosophy of Schopenhauer is pessimistic in this sense. We all say that there is a way out but the world is essentially an evil. We have got to choose between the three alternatives only. We must call ourselves either Optimists or Meliorists or Pessimists. There is no escape from this. Now both Optimism and Meliorism have been proved to be false. PESSIMISM THEREFORE IS THE ONLY TRUTH AND THIS IS THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARDS LIFE. As for the POSITIVE PROOFS OF PESSIMISM, I have also placed them before my readers.

If there is any true view of life, it is Pessimism alone. *It is not a pose.* That Pessimism is a pose, we have heard from RABINDRANATH himself. When the poet visited Europe in the year the Nobel Prize was awarded to him, he contributed an article on Pessimism to the Hibbert Journal of England. It is in that article that Rabindranath called Pessimism a pose. Whether ‘pose’ is a term rightly applicable to Rabindranath or to the Yogis and Rishis of India is a matter I leave to my readers to decide. I admit that a pseudo-pessimist like Byron may strike an attitude for the sake of effect, but the inner meaning of Pessimism I have discussed at length and so an emphatic protest against Rabindranath's view of Pessimism is absolutely needed before I finish my paper. The two chief reasons that appear to be responsible for Rabindranath's estimate of Pessimism are : (1) the theology of the

Brahmo Samaj to which he belongs and (2) the inspiration he derives like Wordsworth from Nature. As for the theology of the Brahmo Samaj, everybody knows that it is optimistic mono-theism with the Unitarian, the Protestant and the eclectic elements in it propped up by convenient texts from the Upanishads ; and as for the poets of Nature it is a remarkable fact that a hopeless confusion of ideas that exists in their mind about the Moral Law and the Law of Nature stands in the way of their true interpretation of human life and activities. Even such a poem as Wordsworth's Ode to Duty may be cited to illustrate the truth of my remark. It is one of the greatest poems in the whole range of literature, and some of the greatest truths have been feelingly uttered by Wordsworth in this poem. But there is one false note which jars on our ears and it is this :

"Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong ;
And the most ancient Heavens through Thee
are fresh and strong."

These are lines of considerable beauty no doubt ; but our poet of Nature here has made a mess of the whole thing as he has confused Moral Law with the Law of Nature—two laws that are quite distinct, for Physical Law is unmoral. Many more examples may be cited like this, but one typical instance is enough.

That Nature, though unmoral, is beautiful and sublime none can deny. From Nature comes the poet's inspiration—and the contemplation of her beauty, it is quite true, brings not only joy and calm to the mind but causes even trance to certain soft souls. Wordsworth, for instance, was subject to this trance. Whether Rabindranath also falls into this sort of trance I do not know. BUT THIS KIND OF TRANCE IS NOT AND CANNOT BE THE SAMADHI OF OUR YOGIS. Had that been so Wordsworth would never have written like this :

"Me this uncharter'd freedom tires ;
I feel the weight of chance desires."

The man who passes into *Samadhi* ceases to have any moral struggle at all, perfect self-mastery being his constant experience. The man returning from this state is a new man altogether like Lord Buddha of hallowed memory. This is THE MEANING OF TRANSFIGURATION. On the heights of the mountains and in the depths of the forests were the hermitages of the Yogis of India. The Himalayas and Vindhyacl, the

banks of the Ganga and the Yamuna, the Godavari and the Saraswati, the Narmada, the Sindhu and the Kauvery, the solitary shores of the heaving seas of Malabar and Coromondal, the deep forests of Naimisaranya and Dandakaranya are still vibrant with their spirituality and are the places of pilgrimage to thousands of weary souls craving for the Beyond. Face to face with the Sublime and the Beautiful in Nature they always stood, and it would be absurd to suppose that they had no feeling for Nature because they habitually shut their eyes and retired into themselves. They had all the feelings of the poets and a great deal more. They knew a higher healing power than the healing power of Nature, and they knew that Nature can never be a substitute for the Self. They knew Nature not only as beautiful and sublime, but they knew her also "red in tooth and claw," and they knew also the instincts she has implanted in man—the instincts that bring all our woes. The æsthetician's weakness was never theirs and they knew that communion with Nature can never take the place of self-discipline. Wordsworth felt this and that explains his invocation to Duty, "the stern daughter of the voice of God." *The apotheosis of Nature is but refined idolatry.* That which is beautiful is not necessarily good and necessarily true. *Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram* (the True, the Good, the Beautiful), *Raso vai sa* (He is Bliss itself) are texts that have nothing to do with the world of Maya, and even the most innocent joy arising from the contemplation of Nature is not *Paramananda* (Supreme joy) but *Vishayananda* (fleeting joy arising from the world of sense). The *rishis* knew all about the feeling of Wordsworth for Nature and Rabindranath's feeling for Nature—and above all they had a taste of that Joy after tasting which it is impossible for a man to be joyless again ; but wonder of wonders ! their unanimous verdict is that life is full of misery and it is reserved for Rabindranath to say that pessimism is a pose ! In justice to Rabindranath I must say that he has smitten on the chord of sorrow as very few have done, and his best poems I believe are those with a sad note in them. As Shelley has so well said :

" Our sweetest songs are those
That tell of saddest thoughts."

Thus we see that not only the highest life but also the best poetry comes from Pessimism. The poem that to my mind comes straight from the heart of Rabindranath in spite

of his theology and attitude towards Nature is that well-known song in his Gitanjali :

*Jaraye acche baddha,
Chharaye jete chai, etc.*

The delicacy of the poem it is impossible to communicate through an English version but the sense is this : "Entangled am I in the meshes of life. How I yearn to be free from these, yet the thought of freedom fills me with pain. I come to You, Lord, to pray for Mukti. I know that you alone are to be sought after, but when I look within and see the number of desires there, I feel ashamed of myself and the word Mukti sticks in my throat. The dust of earth covers my soul and brings to me death after death. I hate all this from the bottom of my heart and yet cannot help loving all this. That is why I tremble with fear when I come to You to pray for my good."

What is all this but Pessimism—not THE SOARING PESSIMISM OF THE HINDU, the Pessimism that leads to Mukti, but the very wail and groan of despair. That being so, does it lie in the poet's mouth to say that Pessimism is a pose? Why again do his disciples say that *vairagya sadhan* is no part of their *dharma*, it is enough if they feel joy in life, hold communion with Nature, read poetry at leisure and visit the *mandir* (church) now and then to hear a song, a prayer and a sermon? Why is it that they do not admit that there is a higher chastity than that of the married state and why is it that they have such rooted antipathy against the ideal of *Sannyasa*? Unless they come forward with a straight reply to these straight questions, I am bound to say that RABINDRANATH'S VOICE IS NOT THE VOICE OF INDIA AND HE IS NOT AT ALL OUR REPRESENTATIVE POET. The man who will interpret India must have reverence for India's ideals. The man who will interpret India must enter into the spirit of her cultural continuity and cultural history from the Vedic times to THE PRESENT AGE—THE AGE OF RAMAKRISHNA. If the people of the West fail to understand that Rabindranath's message is his own message—for Rabindranath is a man of genius in his own way and has his share of originality though *originality does not mean anything absolutely new*—or for that matter if they fail to understand that his message is the message of the Brahmo Samaj based on Unitarianism-cum-Protestantism-cum-Eclecticism embellished with those texts from the

Upanishads which suit its purpose, or for that matter if they fail to understand that his voice is the voice of the poets of Nature and the so-called mystic poets of the West with slight variations here and there, then it is the duty of India to dis-
 abuse the mind of the people of the West of the false impres-
 sion they are labouring under. That in Rabindranath's nature there is a strong element of Bhakti—that he is a Bhakta goes without saying—that he has also drawn much inspiration from the poets of Vaishnavism, Kabir and the Bauls I readily admit. Still the reservation with which he has spoken and his suppression of all the distinctive features of our Bhakti-cult—the reservation and suppression due to the creed of his Church—stand in the way of our accepting him as the representative poet of India. I wonder how his voice can ever pass for the voice of our country. If the mellifluous lyrics of the Vaishnava poets of Bengal which Mr. Chapman of the Imperial Library of Calcutta is translating into English—the lyrics in which the names of Radha and Krishna occur again and again, the lyrics without the least reservation or suppression to suit the so-called refined modern taste,—if these lyrics of sublimated love are taken by the West for the voice of India, then it will be partly right, for the voice of India they partly are. THE FULL MESSAGE OF INDIA WAS DELIVERED TO THE WEST BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ALONE—BY FAR THE GREATEST MAN OF THE AGE NEXT ONLY TO RAMAKRISHNA. Look where you may, you will not light on one who has the realisation, fire and force to repeat the feat of that prophetic soul—and not only did he deliver his message to the West with the boldness which was his, but he also saw THE VISION OF AWAKENED INDIA not because he was an optimist, not because he was a meliorist, but because he believed in the Great Law of our country's Pessimism that every rise has its fall and every fall its rise.

ERRATA.

PAGE 1,	LINE 14	FOR	'beneficient'	READ	'beneficent'
" 16,	" 34	"	'Eendæmonism'	"	'Eudæmonism'
" 18,	" 31	"	'house-holers'	"	'house-holders'
" 19,	" 3	"	'gold'	"	'greed'
" 19,	" 27	"	'anadam'	"	'anandam'
" 33,	" 24	"	'but'	"	'and a little more stress on'

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